Q: Why should you compost organic waste from the home?

A: A large proportion of garden waste and food scraps collected by local authorities in the UK end up being disposed of in landfill. If you compost you could be helping to reduce the amount of waste buried. Allowing it to break down in a composter is more beneficial to the environment. Landfill can produce far more greenhouse gas when breaking down organic matter than a home composter and you also end up with a usable material to put back in your garden.

Q: Why choose the Green Johanna?

A: The Green Johanna is a superior composter designed so that the contents are well ventilated, given free drainage and kept in a protected environment during the break down process. Its special conical shape helps prevent waste sticking to the inside leaving space for the air to move around. As long as you follow the simple instructions, you should find the Green Johanna easy to use.

Q: What is the Green Johanna made of?

A: It is made of a durable plastic that resists attack from the elements including extremes of temperature and is expected to last for around 10 years or more. It comes with a 5 year warranty. Although each unit is checked before despatch, please contact us if you find there is a fault or parts are missing upon delivery and we will be pleased to assist you.

Q: How do you start?

A: Since good air circulation is important to ensure efficient operation of your Green Johanna you will need to place inside at the base, branches and twigs in a layer that should be about 20 centimetres (8 inches) deep. After that you add your garden and kitchen waste.

Q: Can I place the Green Johanna in direct sunlight?

A: No as the contents should not be allowed to get too hot since this can kill off the beneficial microbes breaking down the contents.

Q: Can you use the composter during the wintertime?

A: Yes, with the Green Johanna you can get a winter jacket that protects againstthe cold and the wind. It's guaranteed to work down to -25°C. It is recommended that the winter jacket be used when the temperature drops below approximately 5 degrees Celsius.

Q: For how many years will the winter jacket last?

A: Just as many years as the Green Johanna.

Q: What can't I put in my composter?

A: Glass, plastic, rubber, paint, chemicals, fabric and so on.

Q: Can I just throw everything in the compost in no special order?

A: No you should put material rich in carbon and material rich in nitrogen in layers.

Q: Should material be broken up before being thrown into the compost?

A: Ideally you should break up the material into small pieces, making the micro-organisms and worms work more quickly.

Q: If I don't put the material in layers, what happens?

A: If you mainly throw material rich in nitrogen in the compost, it will get too wet and start to rot and smell. If you then on the other hand throw in too much material rich in carbon the process will go very slowly or stop.

Q: How thick should the layers of material be in my composter?

A: Not more than 5cm (2 inches).

Q: How much newly cut grass can I put in my composter?

A: Avoid large amounts of grass as this can prevent oxygen getting through and slow or stop the process. You may wish to leave this aside and add slowly over a period of time. The same would apply to leaves.

Q: Can weeds grow in my composter?

A: No, as they will be killed in the high temperatures generated inside.

Q: What can I put in my composter?

A: From the kitchen: Fruit, vegetables, dairy products, fish, shellfish, meat,bones, coffee grounds with filter, teabags, eggshells, bread, sauce, soup,egg cartons and so on.
From the garden: Grass, leaves, twigs and branches.

Q: What are rich in carbon?

A: Sawdust, twigs, leaves and paper.

Q: What are rich in nitrogen?

A: Eggs, fish and meat. Newly cut grass also contains a lot of nitrogen.

Q: What kind of paper from the household can be thrown into the compost bin?

A: Unbleached crepe paper, napkins, coffee filter, torn egg cartons and daily papers (if they are lead free).

Q: What should I do if I put a lot of meat in the compost bin?

A: Put sawdust on the top and close (but not entirely) the ventilation for a few days, so the flies can't get in.

Q: What kind of material should I spread over the kitchen waste?

A: Sawdust, torn egg cartons, garden waste. (Carbon rich material).

Q: What type of carbon rich material should not be used in the compost?

A: Ashes, lime and Newspapers, due to the risk of lead in the ink.

Q: Where should you locate a Green Johanna?

A: Aim to have the Green Johanna as close to the kitchen as possible as you may want to put food waste in up to 4 times a week. The composter should stand on soil or grass so that the worms can get in through the holes in the base. A good place is among trees, which give shade. They will also offer a certain amount of protection from the cold in winter.

Q: Why are the contents in the composter warm during the process?

A: When the micro-organisms are actively breaking down waste, energy is released. How warm the compost gets depends on what you have put in together with levels of oxygen and moisture. The micro-organisms work at between 2 and 75 degrees. Different micro-organisms work at different temperatures. The optimum working temperature in the compost bin will be around 45-65 degrees plus.

Q: Do I have to add any chemicals to get started?

A: No absolutely not! In fact chemicals may upset the natural balance of the system so best avoided.

Q: Can I put kitchen waste directly in the compost without the branches and twigs first?

A: No, as a good flow of air at the base is essential for efficient operation of the Green Johanna.

Q: Can I mix garden waste and kitchen waste?

A: Yes. It is recommended that you put one part garden waste and two parts kitchen waste in to help balance the carbon and nitrogen levels which will make better compost more quickly.

Q: How much of my kitchen waste can I put in my compost?

A: The Green Johanna will take around 120 kilos per person a year.

Q: Can I still use the composter if I only have kitchen waste?

A: Yes, if you add layers of sawdust (carbon to balance the nitrogen in the food waste).

Q: Can the winter jacket be damaged by rodents or birds?

A: If you keep the jacket clean from food scraps and so on, animals have no interest in attacking it.

Q: How is the winter jacket assembled?

A: Full instructions come with the winter jacket and it is very simple to put together. It is important that you add the winter jacket with the Green Johanna standing on its base. If you do not, you may find it prevents the lid closing.

Q: Can I leave the winter jacket on during the summer?

A: No, you should remove it when the temperature will no longer falls below 10 degrees Celsius. If you leave it on, the Green Johanna may overheat and stop working correctly.

Q: What do I do if the contents in the Green Johanna have frozen?

A: Pour warm water over the contents (around 37 degrees Celsius) together with some further kitchen or garden waste to reintroduce microbes. If you know that the compost was too wet whenit froze, try without water, using only the organic matter. An alternative method to do this without getting the compost to wet is to place a plastic drink bottle containing boiled water into the compost. Please take care when handling hot water.

Q: What are the dimensions of the Green Johanna?

A: It is 90cm (36 inches) across at the base, the lid is 52cm (21 inches) wide and its overall height is 95cm (38 inches). The volume is 330 litres and it weighs 10 kilos.

Q: How much waste can it take?

A: It is designed for a household with up to five people together with the compostable waste produced from an average garden. However since this is extremely variable, if you believe you are filling it too quickly it would be recommended to have a second Green Johanna. Remember a garden produces less waste in winter. Some of the material in summer can be kept to layer in with food waste during winter.

Q: Why are there holes in the base?

A: This allows naturally occurring insects and worms to gain access to aid the breakdown process. It also lets excess moisture out into the ground.